

Professional applications of information literacy: Helping researchers learn to evaluate journal quality

North Carolina Serials Conference

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Hello!

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Hello!

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Land acknowledgement



We acknowledge that the land we are gathered on has long served as the site of meeting and exchange amongst a number of Indigenous peoples, specifically the Keyauwee and Saura. We also want to acknowledge the long history and lasting legacies of slavery on these lands.

Image credit: "Greetings from Greensboro N.C." in North Carolina Postcard Collection (P052), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

Today we're going to:

1. Define information literacy and lateral reading
2. Make connections between information literacy skills and researcher needs
3. Look at examples of predatory publishing solicitations and websites
4. Share resources to help you evaluate journal quality
5. Answer your questions about evaluating publication quality



1. Information literacy

What *is* information literacy?

According to the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education:

“Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.”

A quick poll!

Please head to
www.menti.com and enter
the code 4088 3020 (or use
the QR code to the right) to
answer a quick poll
question about the ACRL
Framework!



ACRL Framework 101

- Focus is on the higher education context, and particularly on developing the information literacy skills of students.
- Was adopted in 2015 to replace the Information Literacy Competency Standards, which had been in place since 2000.
- Draws on threshold concepts theory, metaliteracy, metacognition, and the *Understanding by Design* model.

The Framework's structure

- Introduction
- Six frames (can be thought of as interconnected core concepts or conceptual understandings)
 - Description/discussion of each frame
 - Knowledge practices for each frame
 - Dispositions for each frame
- Appendix 1: Implementing the Framework
- Appendix 2: Background of the Framework development
- Appendix 3: Sources for further reading

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- Introduction
- **Six frames (can be thought of as interconnected core concepts or conceptual understandings)**
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- Appendix 1: Implementing the Framework
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The frames

- Authority is constructed and contextual
- Information creation as a process
- Information has value
- Research as inquiry
- Scholarship as conversation
- Searching as strategic exploration

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- Authority is constructed and contextual
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- Scholarship as conversation
- Searching as strategic exploration

Which concept(s) here seem to connect with efforts to help researchers evaluate journal quality? Please feel free to share your answer in the chat (select all panelists and attendees)!

Authority is constructed and contextual

- Examples of knowledge practices
 - “use research tools and indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility”
 - “understand that many disciplines have acknowledged authorities in the sense of well-known scholars and publications that are widely considered “standard,” and yet, even in those situations, some scholars would challenge the authority of those sources”

(ACRL, 2015)

How do researchers evaluate authority?

- Tenopir et al. (2016) conducted a survey of more than 3,600 researchers “to explore how trust is defined for scholarly information and to discover how scholars worldwide perceive trust to have changed with new forms of scholarly communication” (p. 2347).
- Respondents indicated that a journal’s status as peer-reviewed was a strong indicator of trustworthiness both when reading/using scholarly information and when seeking publishing venues for their own work (Tenopir et al., 2016, p. 2349-2350).

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However, with all of the changes in dissemination channels, the methods and criteria used to justify trustworthiness and quality remain surprisingly traditional. Content clues, including checking for soundness of ideas, quality of figures and tables, and reading an abstract remain highly ranked as decision factors when deciding to trust scholarly resources. Traditional criteria such as journal ranking remain essential, even though this is criticized by the very researchers who rely on it. (Tenopir et al., 2016, p. 2355)

A changing scholarly publishing landscape

- Swanberg et al. (2020) surveyed faculty at Oakland University to answer two research questions (p. 209):
 1. What gaps, if any, exist in faculty members' knowledge of predatory OA journals, including the ability to identify one?
 2. What are faculty attitudes toward predatory OA journals?
- Faculty expressed a range of confidence levels about assessing journal quality.
- Respondents were also asked what resources they used to determine journal quality, and the top 3 responses were: colleagues, Google (or a similar search engine), and professional listservs, blogs, or websites (Swanberg et al., 2020, p. 214).

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However, it was clear that faculty were seeking help and more information about predatory OA journals, with most reporting wanting a checklist to assess journal quality (70.9%), followed by information on the library website (65.2%)... Furthermore, our libraries' educational efforts have focused on developing critical thinking skills in appraising journal quality and legitimacy, which aligns with the Association for College & Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. (Swanberg et al., 2020, p. 216)

Authority is constructed and contextual

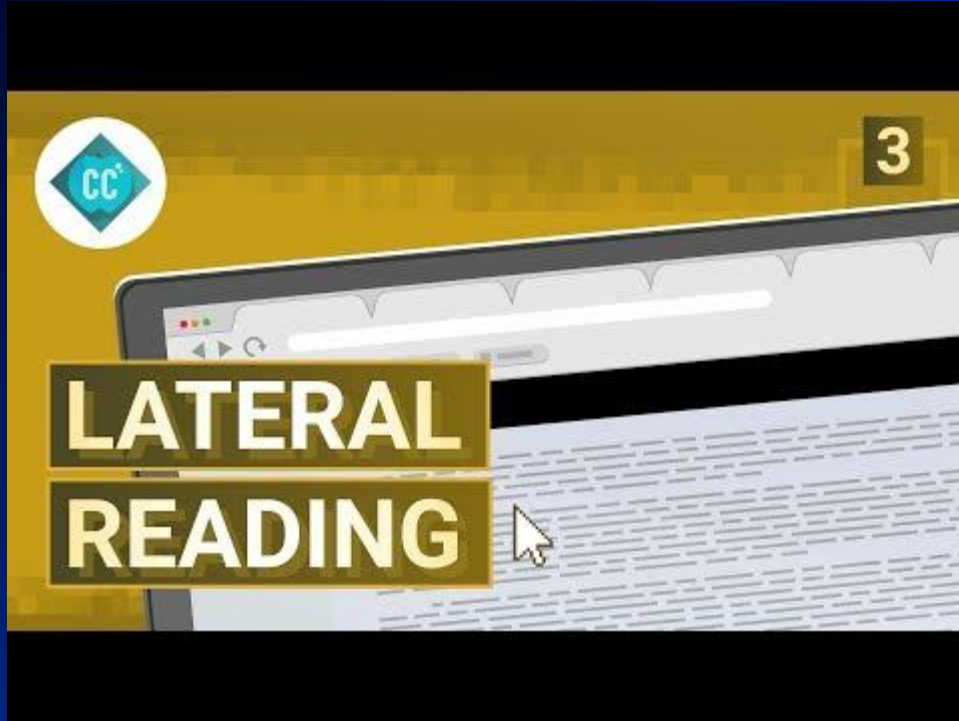
- Examples of knowledge practices
 - “use research tools and indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility”
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(ACRL, 2015)

Lateral reading: A flexible approach

- Term comes from Sam Wineburg and colleagues
 - Education and History professor at Stanford
 - Founder and Executive Director of the Stanford History Education Group and Stanford's Ph.D. program in History Education
- Wineburg & McGrew (2019) compared the online information evaluation skills of three groups of internet users and found that fact-checkers “employed a powerful heuristic for taking bearings: lateral reading. Fact checkers almost immediately opened up a series of new tabs on the horizontal axis of their browsers before fully reading the article” (p. 19).

Lateral vs. vertical reading



[Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3](#)

Why read laterally?

Caulfield (2017, ch. 16):

- "...good fact-checkers read 'laterally,' across many connected sites instead of digging deep into the site at hand."
- "Lateral readers don't spend time on the page or site until they've first gotten their bearings by looking at what other sites and resources say about the source at which they are looking."
- "Lateral reading helps the reader understand both the perspective from which the site's analyses come and if the site has an editorial process or expert reputation that would allow one to accept the truth of a site's facts."

Supplement checklist approaches with lateral reading!

Let's take a look at Think. Check. Submit.



2.

Evaluating journal quality

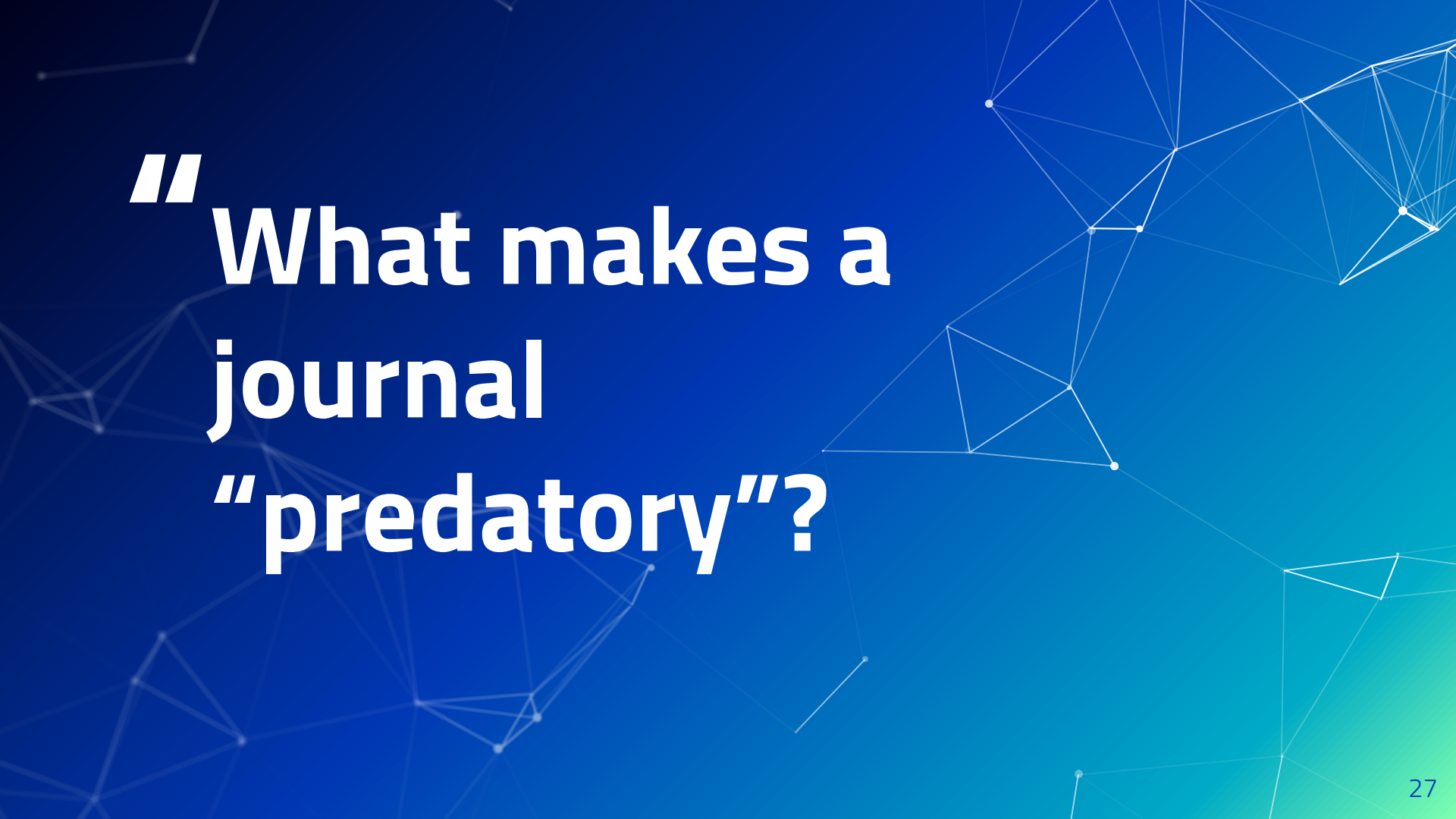
Another quick poll!

Please head to www.menti.com and enter the code 5732 4168 (or use the QR code to the right) to answer a quick poll question about predatory journals!



If you have, you're not alone!

- Many academics receive solicitations from predatory and exploitative publications
- The more you publish, the more of these solicitations you will likely receive
- If you're in a discipline that produces article-based scholarship, you're likely to encounter predatory journals



**“What makes a
journal
“predatory”?”**

How do we define *predatory*?

“Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices”

- Grudniewicz A, Moher D, Cobey KD, et al. Predatory journals: no definition, no defence. *Nature* 2019;576:210–2. doi: [10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y)



Note: Using the label “predatory” in relation to publications can cause discomfort for some people

Also, journals and publishers tend to strongly dislike being labeled as “predatory,” especially publicly



Is there a better term?

- Bad faith?
- Bogus?
- Deceptive?
- Dishonest?
- Exploitative?
- Fake?
- Fraudulent?
- Manipulative?
- Questionable?
- Unethical?

Maybe?

But for our purposes right now, “predatory” is the term that seems to be most recognized and used for this behavior (in the library field and beyond)

**So how do we know if a
journal is predatory?**

Red flags

- Accepting articles quickly with little or no peer review or quality control
- Notifying authors of publication fees only after manuscripts are accepted, and aggressively demanding payment
- Aggressively soliciting academics with requests to submit articles or serve on editorial boards (often via direct email)
- Listing real academics as members of editorial boards without their permission, and not honoring requests from individuals wishing to resign or remove themselves from these positions
- Creating and appointing fake academic personas to serve on editorial boards

More red flags

- Mimicking the name and/or duplicating the website style of an established journal
- Making misleading claims about the publishing operation, such as a false place of publication
- Citing a fake or non-existent impact factor
- Claiming to be "indexed" by academic social networking sites (ResearchGate, Academia.edu)
- Highlighting standard identifiers (ISSNs, DOIs) as if they were prestigious or reputable bibliographic indicators

Direct email solicitations are common

- Unsolicited emails may praise your work, and may include citations of recent papers you've published
- Your area of research may have little or no relation to the topic on which they are soliciting content
- Solicitation email and/or journal website uses poor grammar and/or spelling
- Content solicitation email may also offer you the "opportunity" to join the editorial board

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**Should I just assume
that any publication that
sends direct email
solicitations is not a
publication I want to be
associated with?**

Remember:
**Journal practices can change
over time, and personal
experiences with and
evaluations of individual
journals can vary**



Let's look at some
examples

Some
journals
don't need
much
evaluation

Current Respiratory Medicine Reviews

April 2, 2021

Dr. AR Craft
Univ North Carolina Greensboro
Univ Lib
Metadata Serv
POB 26170, Greensboro
USA

Dear Dr. Craft,

Current Respiratory Medicine Reviews (CRMR) is in the process of appointing Executive Guest Editors. This journal is indexed in *Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)*, *Scopus*, *EMBASE*, *Chemical Abstracts Service/SciFinder*, and other major indexing agencies and publishes in the areas of clinical research on all the latest advances on respiratory diseases and its related areas *e.g.* pharmacology, pathogenesis, clinical care, therapy. We would like you to consider Guest Editing a special thematic issue of the journal in an important emerging field of general interest.

Executive Guest Editors are appointed for a period of three years and are expected to submit a thematic issue annually. The formal appointment of an Executive Guest Editor (EGE) is made on the receipt and acceptance of a thematic issue proposal in a hot and emerging field. If you accept our nomination, then we hope that you will be able to submit an outline of the thematic issue at your earliest. The thematic issue itself will be expected to be submitted within 4 months of the acceptance of your preliminary proposal. Such thematic issues may be guest edited by the Executive

**Some
journals
really
don't need
much
evaluation**

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**Decision on manuscript: 24 hours
Publication time: 2 days
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Contact details:

**Unfortunately, it's not
always so easy**

Invitation to Join Editorial Board



open-access/predatory-pub x



Whioce Singapore <zpub02178@tb-journals.com>

Sat, May 26, 2018, 9:17 AM



to me ▾

Dear Anna R. Craft,

Greetings and good day.

I represent Editorial Office of Whioce Publishing Pte. Ltd. from Singapore. We have come across your recent article, "Digital Scholarship Planning: A Perspective on the CNI-ARL Workshop" published in Serials Review. We feel that the topic of this article is very interesting. Therefore, we are delighted to invite you to join the Editorial Board of our journal, entitled Progress in Human Computer Interaction. We also hope that you can submit your future work in our journal. Please reply to this email if you are interested in joining the Editorial Board.

I look forward to hearing your positive response. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Best regards,

KH NG

Editorial Office

Progress in Human Computer Interaction



Reply



Forward

International Journal of Information and Communication Sciences

(ISSN Print:2575-1700 ISSN Online: 2575-1719)

Open Access Policy

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Fast Publication (50-90 Days)



Dear Craft, AR

Greetings!

We have learnt about your precious paper with the title *Is This a Quality Journal to Publish In How Can You Tell* which has been published in *SERIALS REVIEW*, and the topic of the paper has impressed us a lot.

It has drawn attention and interest from researchers and scholars specializing in academic journals; academic libraries; open access; predatory publishing; scholarly communication.

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Dear Craft, AR

Greetings!

We have learnt about your precious paper with the title /s 7
been published in *SERIALS REVIEW* and the topic of the

Login / Regeister

Editor-in-Chief (From Feb. 27, 2016 to Dec. 31, 2017)



Hamza M. R. Al-Khafaji

Affiliation: Biomedical Engineering Department, Al-Mustaqbal
University College

Address: Hillah, Babil, Iraq

But I received this
email in 2019!

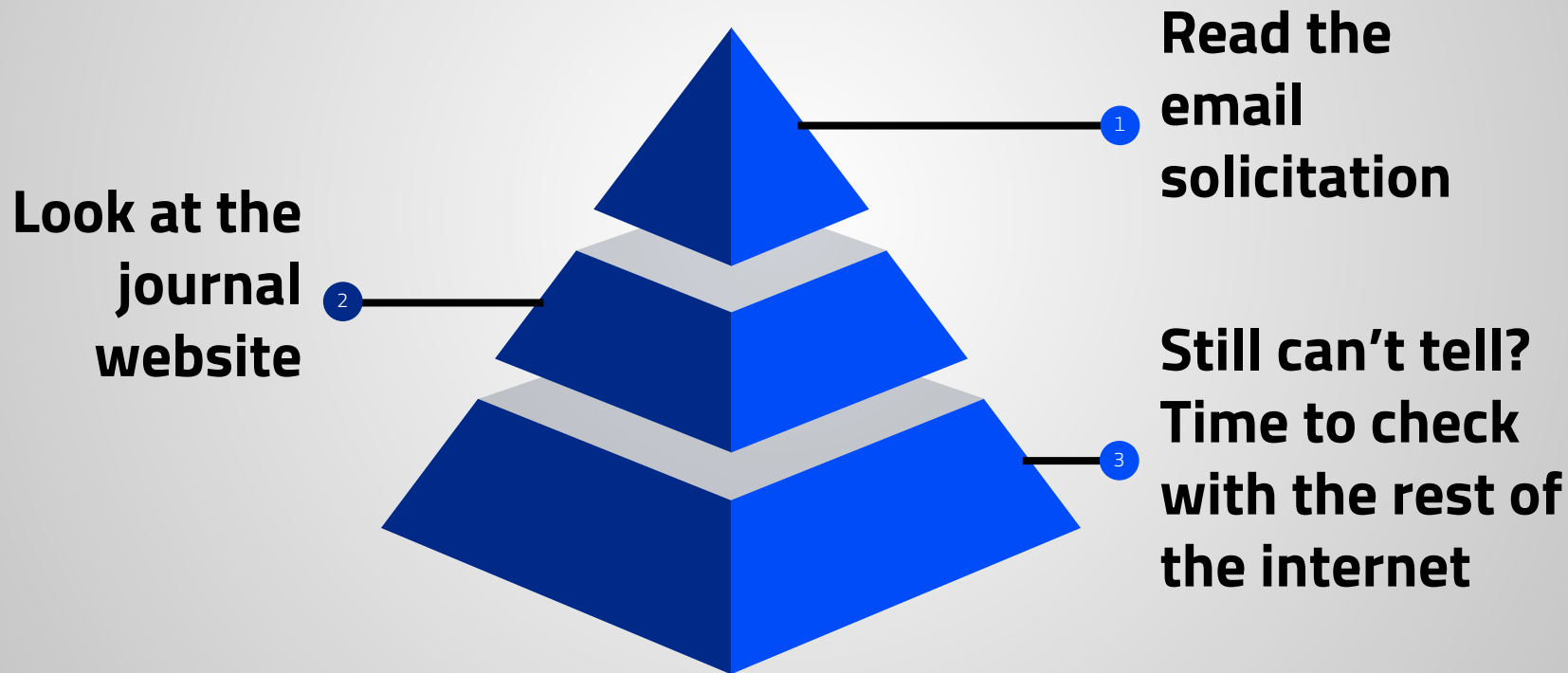
sciences

More Journals

**Not all predatory journal
websites and emails show
immediate, glaring
 red flags **

**You may need to consult other
resources to help you learn
about the journal in question**

That's where lateral reading comes in!





But where do I start?

Google it! (or use the search engine of your choice)

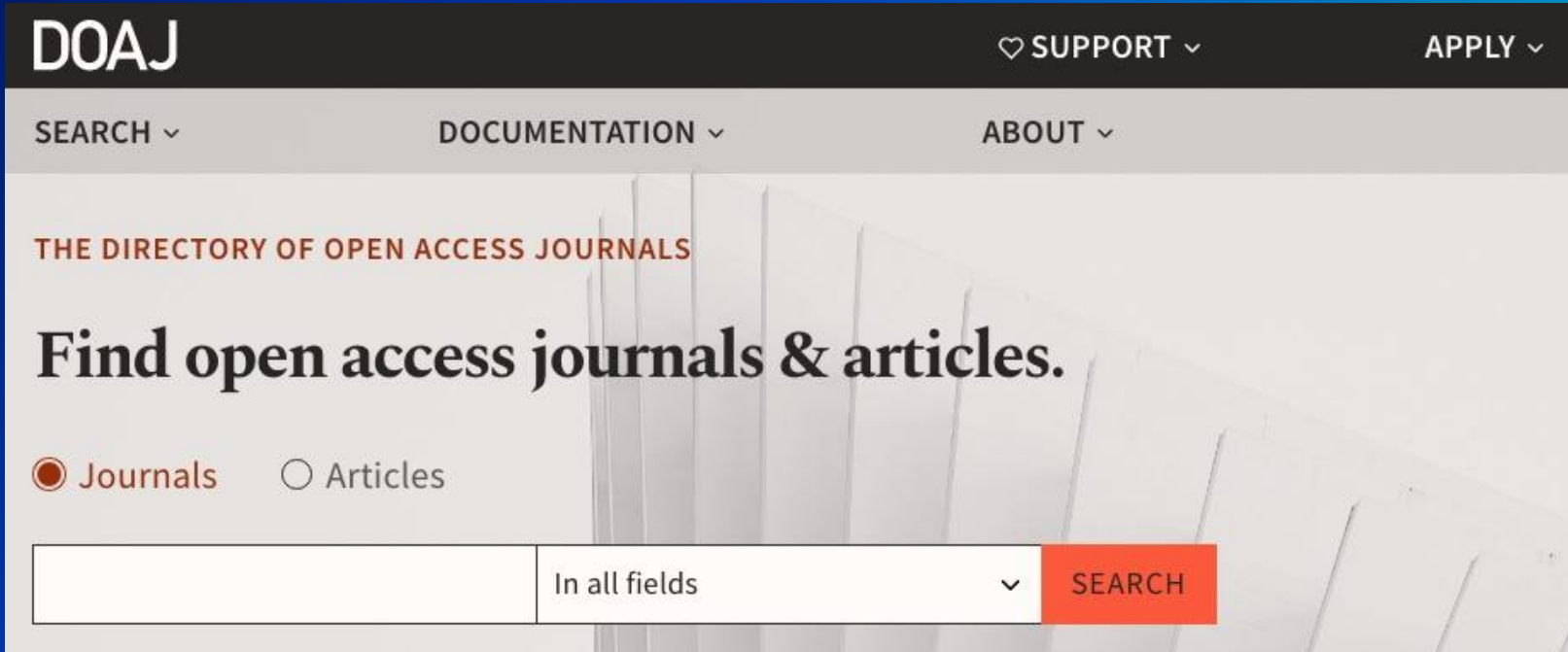
- Don't just read what the journal or publisher says about itself; read what others say about it
- Search for the journal, publisher, or conference name and the word "predatory"
- [Wikipedia](#) can sometimes provide information about journal or publisher history/behavior (and links with documentation)

Talk to colleagues

- Advisors, mentors, other colleagues (and, of course, librarians) may have experience with a particular journal or publisher
- Do you know someone on the journal's **editorial board**?
 - Reach out and ask them about their experience

Directory of Open Access Journals

Is the publication included in **DOAJ**? If so, that's a positive sign: <https://doaj.org/>

A screenshot of the DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) website. The header is dark grey with the DOAJ logo on the left, and 'SUPPORT' and 'APPLY' links on the right. Below the header is a light grey navigation bar with 'SEARCH', 'DOCUMENTATION', and 'ABOUT' links. The main content area has a background image of book spines. It features the text 'THE DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS' in red, followed by 'Find open access journals & articles.' in large black font. Below this are radio buttons for 'Journals' (selected) and 'Articles'. At the bottom is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to 'In all fields' and a red 'SEARCH' button.

DOAJ

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Journal of Learning Spaces

📖 2158-6195 (ONLINE)

🔗 Website

🔗 ISSN Portal

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journal. other charges.

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📖 This journal uses a **CC BY**
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→ Look up their [open access](#)

JOURNAL METADATA

📍 Publisher
University of North Carolina
at Greensboro, United States

Manuscripts accepted in
English

Is the journal indexed?







- Where does the journal *say* they are indexed?
 - Actual, legitimate scholarly indexes?
- Where is the journal *actually* indexed?
 - Consider checking your preferred indexes to see if you can find content from the journal

Some websites track predatory journals

- Exercise your own judgement when using these sites/lists
- Consider who is creating and maintaining the list
- Look for the criteria used in creating the list
- How old is the list/site? Is it still updated and maintained?
- Examples:
 - [Beall's List](#)
 - [Cabells' Predatory Reports](#) (subscription required)
 - [Stop Predatory Journals](#)

Even with all these
resources, evaluating
journals can be tricky






Evaluating a journal, example #1

- Journal is listed in DOAJ 
- Publisher is a member of COPE 
- Journal website is clear about policies on open access, copyright, author fees; no immediate glaring red flags on website or email communications 
- Journal is not indexed in any major academic search systems 
- Journal is new-ish; established ~4 years ago  

New journals can be tough to evaluate

- It takes time to get established – both for academics and for publications!
- Do you know any of the people involved in developing the journal?
- Is there an institution or scholarly group associated with the journal?
- What information can you find about the publisher?

Evaluating a journal, example #2

- Journal is listed in DOAJ 
- Publisher *was* on Beall's List, but has been removed 
- Publisher's Wikipedia page details major peer review scandals from several years ago 
- An acquaintance from a nearby university is a guest editor for the issue  

Sometimes there may not be a clear answer

You may find conflicting information online (or learn conflicting information from colleagues), with some who have had a positive experience with a certain publisher, and others who say a publisher or journal is predatory and tell you to steer clear

In these cases, you have to determine your own level of comfort with the particular publisher and/or journal

Helping researchers learn to evaluate journals can be challenging!

What tools and techniques do you use for educating researchers about predatory journals?

Please share!

THANKS!

Any questions?

- Jenny: jedale2@uncg.edu
- Anna: arcraft@uncg.edu

Slides:

<https://go.uncg.edu/ncsc2021>

Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by [Unsplash](#)

References

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Resources

- Think Check Submit: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
- Directory of Open Access Journals: <https://doaj.org>
- Beall's List: <https://beallslist.net/>
- Cabell's Predatory Reports:
<http://www2.cabells.com/about-predatory> (subscription required)
- Stop Predatory Journals: <https://predatoryjournals.com/>